

The licensed use of the public airwaves has historically been made available to private corporations and individuals for broadcast in exchange for the understanding that they have an obligation to serve the public interest and to observe standards of fairness and decency. In recent years this obligation has receded further and further from view, while at the same time rules concerning the concentration of media ownership have been weakened. I am gravely concerned with this trend and the potential that it creates for control over what citizens are able to hear and see.

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation. When large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy, which is a free and full airing of contrasting points of view and local decisions about what is shown on local stations.

Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.